

Thanksgiving approaches (or “approacheth” as I guess our Pilgrim forebears would say), and we prepare to spend a few days in relaxation and appreciation of the blessings in our lives. Between bad NFL games, meaningless NBA games (ugh!), campy parades and ludicrously large meals, we pause to remember and give thanks for our families, friends, faiths and other favorite things.

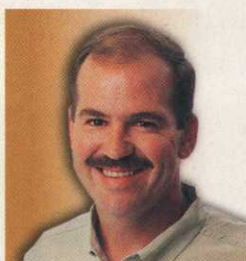
But let’s face it: Some of us will be hard-pressed on Nov. 25 to find things about the golf industry for which to be truly thankful. With too many courses, too few players, nutty weather and constant pressure to provide perfection at .100 of an inch, it just ain’t easy. But we here at *Golfdom* are always up for a challenge, so allow me to list a few things for which I plan to give thanks on Turkey Day.

Sunrises. There’s nothing like watching the sun come up over a golf course. I recently revisited FarmLinks, the Alabama facility run cooperatively by Pursell Technologies, The Toro Co., Syngenta Professional Products, Club Car and other companies. Aside from the educational and recreational opportunities that abound there, the place is simply gorgeous. I’m an early riser (OK, maybe not as early as you), and the simple joy of sipping a steaming mug of coffee on the back patio of the guest lodge and watching old Sol gradually reveal the spectacular dew-covered peninsula hole that lies below the lodge was incomparable. There aren’t many other businesses that offer that fringe benefit.

Our Fraternity. No, I don’t mean Alpha Sigma Turfa. I refer to the fraternal ties shared by those in this business. The legendary Canadian superintendent, Gordon Witteveen, once described it as being part of a “band of brothers.” (I’m sure he’d include our sisters in the profession as well today, but the meaning is the same.) You share a common bond that unites you against the vagaries of green committees, the harsh and unpredictable challenges of Mother Nature and the nights spent tossing and turning over a recalcitrant pump station. That bond simply doesn’t exist in most other professions. Don’t take it for granted ... and never lose it. It’s special.

Giving Thanks for Favorite Things

BY PAT JONES



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The Pure Shot. Hey, even a blind squirrel finds a nut occasionally. Just say thanks to the Golf Gods for the occasional Palmeresque moment bestowed upon you or your players ... that’s what keeps duffers like me coming back and makes this otherwise aggravating game worth playing for all of us.

The Boomers, Tiger, Michelle Wie and John Daly. Yes, the market is overbuilt and rounds have been flat forever, but the outlook remains surprisingly good. The post-WWII babies are retiring or scaling back and golf remains the game of choice for lots of them. Also, golf has historically been strongest when we have great personalities out front. Slump or no slump, Tiger is still an awesome poster-boy for the game. Michelle Wie could become the Mia Hamm or Mary Lou Retton that brings young girls into the sport in droves. And good old John Boy, in spite of the “unrefined” label (or maybe because of it), is a magnet that attracts nontraditional players.

You. The fact that you’re willing to give up some of your precious time to read this remains extremely gratifying to me. Call that pandering mush if you like, but we recently commissioned a readership study and 70 percent of you said you receive more magazines than you have time to read. So, like I said, thanks for choosing to devote an hour or so of your most valuable commodity to *Golfdom*.

Finally, as you count your blessings on Thanksgiving, don’t forget to include the fact that you get paid to do something that merges the pure beauty of nature, the rewarding joy of recreation and the electric thrill of competition. Think about that.

Now go get another piece of pumpkin pie.

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